

NSC BRIEFING

24 April 1956

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DEMOTION OF BULGARIAN PREMIER CHERVENKOV

1. The replacement of Bulgarian premier Chervenkov by his rival Anton Yugov may mark an increase in Soviet willingness to allow the Satellite countries greater control of their own affairs.

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2. The decision to remove Chervenkov appears to have been made at the Bulgarian central committee level.

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3. Chervenkov who now holds a post as next to last ranking of six vice premiers, was probably the most subservient and imitative of Stalin of all the East European strong men. Even in such details as his dress he wore a worker's blouse and cap imitative of Stalin. His rise to the top began when the famed Bulgarian Communist, Georgi Dimitrov, became fatally ill in the

25X1

25 YEAR RE-REVIEW

-3-

summer of 1948. Chervenkov, who was Dimitrov's son-in-law, eventually emerged victor in a factional fight with Traicho Kostov for the succession. Kostov, leader of those Bulgarian Communists who had fought the war as partisans in the country, was executed in December 1948, condemned as a Titoist spy. His "rehabilitation" this April appears to have been one of the causes of Chervenkov's downfall.

4. It is also likely that Moscow may have wanted Chervenkov removed as a bad symbol of the rigid Stalinist approaches of the past. Chervenkov has seemed reluctant to institute new policies, both internal and foreign, in the era since Stalin's death.

5. Chervenkov's replacement, Anton Yugov, was a member of the Kostov faction. He originally sided with Kostov and probably barely escaped a fate similar to Kostov's. But, though Chervenkov was able to demote Yugov during the period 1949-51, he was never able to eliminate him. By 1952, Yugov had started to climb up the ladder again. His appointment as premier now does not indicate he is in complete control of the regime, however, and he will probably be "first among equals" in a collective leadership that still includes several of Chervenkov's close supporters.

6. Yugov's appointment and the Kostov trial reversal will probably mean intensified efforts at restoring diplomatic relations with the United States. The American minister, Donald Heath was accused during the trial of abetting Kostov. When

-3-

Sofia declared Heath persona non grata after the trial, the United States suspended diplomatic relations on 20 February 1950. Bulgaria may now make a formal retraction and apology for these charges as a means of expediting a restoration of relations, which Bulgaria ardently desires. Other than the general problem of guaranteeing decent treatment of diplomatic personnel, such a retraction would leave only the problem of the celebre trial of Michael Shipkov, an American embassy employee sentenced for spying in March 1950.

7. Chervenkov's downfall was probably designed in part to please the Yugoslavs. But Yugoslav official opinion to date has been conflicting. Officials in Belgrade have expressed strong reservations about the change, which they consider a mere imitation of Moscow's actions. They say their own enemy, Chervenkov, has been removed, but without making substantial differences in any other way. However, a Yugoslav official in Washington [] told [] with unconcealed pleasure, that the change was a major victory for Yugoslavia and that Yugov is considered reliable by the Yugoslavs. He stopped just short of describing Yugov as "our man." It appears probable, in any event, that the change will speed up the improvement of relations between the two countries, but no radical developments appear on the immediate horizon.

25X1

25X1

-4-

3. Any revival of plans for a Balkan federation--an idea for amalgamating Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, and Albania that was originally discussed among Communist leaders in 1944-48--will probably only be in long-range terms. The new Bulgarian premier, Yugev, was a staunch upholder of the Bulgarian viewpoint for equal status with Yugoslavia in such a federation, which conflicted with Belgrade's view that Bulgaria should have a much lesser position. On the Yugoslav side, Belgrade appears to value its ties with Greece and the Balkan Pact sufficiently as to avoid any actions for now which would seriously endanger them.

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